



Solvent-Contaminated Rags/Wipers

Technical Guidance Document HW 95-02

Many businesses use wipers, i.e. cloth towels, rags, paper wipes, or other absorbent materials, to clean up in areas where solvents, paints, inks or petroleum products are used. These wipers may be used in conjunction with solvent in the cleaning process. Solvent-contaminated wipers may be classified as reusable and, if disposed, may be considered a characteristic or listed hazardous waste. Inappropriate handling of solvent contaminated towels and rags may impact employee health and safety. Improper disposal of these items may result in environmental harm and may increase a facility's liability.

Solvent-Contaminated Wipers that are Reused or Recycled

Solvent-contaminated wipers that are laundered by a commercial laundry or are laundered on-site are exempt from state and federal hazardous waste regulations if the wastewater is discharged to a sanitary sewer. Before a facility begins to launder their own towels or rags on-site, the owner/operator must get written approval from the city to discharge the wastewater into the sanitary sewer.

The wipers, that are to be laundered, must not contain any free liquid. Wipers that contain a free liquid phase (as defined by the paint filter test Method 9095, SW-846) and fail ignitability testing (as defined by test method 1010, SW-846) are classified as ignitable under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). A wringer or centrifuge works well to remove the excess solvent which should be managed appropriately. The laundry should be notified that it is receiving solvent-contaminated wipers.

The following steps may be followed to properly manage solvent-contaminated wipers for reuse or recycling:

1. Remove free liquid by wringing. Reuse extracted liquid or manage it as a hazardous waste.
2. Manage solvent-contaminated wipers as hazardous. Store in a closed container marked with the words *Hazardous – Solvent-*

Contaminated Wipers or similar language.

3. Send solvent-contaminated wipers to a commercial laundry that has a discharge permit from its local wastewater treatment plant.

Disposal of Solvent Contaminated Wipers

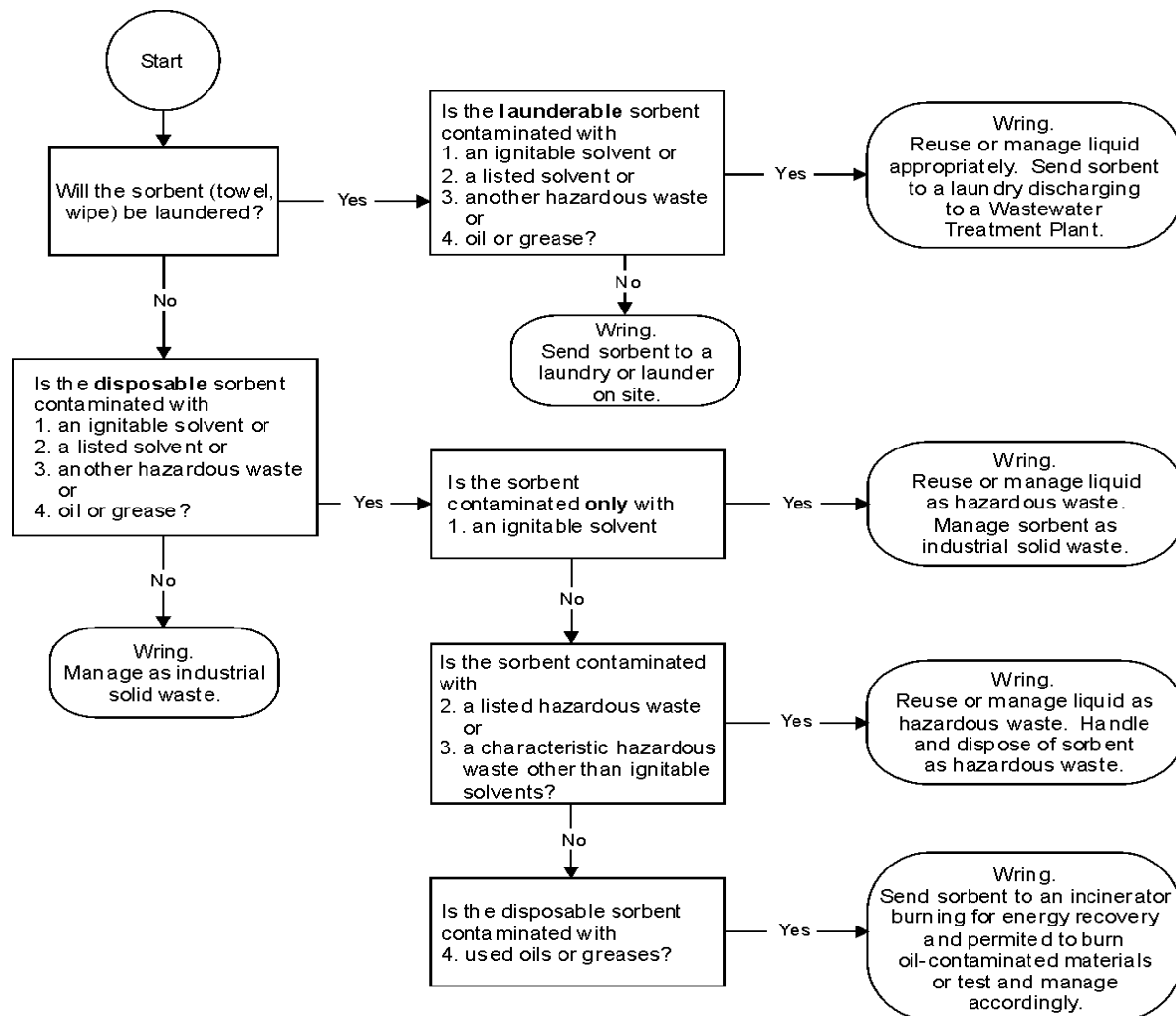
The management of **disposable wipers** is more complex and depends on the type of solvent used. Those disposable wipers that are contaminated with a **characteristic** solvent may be hazardous if the wipers are still ignitable or contain other contaminants such as heavy metals. If the wipers pass the paint filter test as outlined in SW-846 (i.e. they do not contain any free liquids) they are not ignitable. However, they may still be hazardous for other contaminants. These wipers need to be tested using the TCLP in order to make this determination. Although, the hazardous waste regulations do not prohibit the disposal of wipers that are not ignitable and do not contain other contaminants in the trash, other requirements may exist that would prohibit this disposal method such as safety factors, insurance requirements, local fire department regulations, landfill requirements, or local ordinances.

Solvents with the waste codes F001, F002, F004, or F005 are listed due to toxicity. Disposable wipers contaminated with these solvents are a hazardous waste. These towels and rags must be managed as a hazardous waste as outlined in K.A.R. 28-31-4.

Disposable wipers that are contaminated with listed solvent(s) with the waste code F003, may or may not be a hazardous waste. Spent solvents under the waste code F003 are listed solely for the characteristic of ignitability. If disposable wipers contaminated with the F003 spent solvent are ignitable, they are a hazardous waste. If these wipers pass the paint filter test (i.e. they do not contain any free liquids and are therefore not ignitable), do not contain other contaminants, and meet the Land Disposal Restrictions outlined in 40 CFR, Part 268, they are not considered a hazardous waste.

Wipers Contaminated with Used Oil

The federal used oil regulations (40 CFR 279.19(c)), adopted in K.A.R. 28-31-16, state that wipers contaminated with used oil that have been wrung out “to the extent possible such that no visible signs of free flowing oil remain” are not subject to the Part 279 used oil regulations. Instead, wrung-out wipers that are to be disposed are solid waste and a hazardous waste determination must be made for them so they can be managed in the proper manner.



For additional information regarding proper management of solid waste, you may contact the Bureau of Waste Management at (785)296-1600 or the address at the top of this document.